



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE

JOINT FORCES HEADQUARTERS – ALASKA

OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

PO BOX 5800

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF - RICHARDSON AK 99505-0800

NGAK-TAG

26 March 2018

Message to the Force #21

SUBJECT: AKNG in the News

1. The media have been reporting positive news about the Alaska National Guard on a regular basis. In the past year alone, headlines have represented our combat zone deployments and homecomings, the arrival of new aircraft in our Air Guard fleet, and our impressive efforts as a trailblazer in military arctic strategy, cooperation and training. Alaska Guard members provided support to the hurricane emergency relief effort in four locations; we provided engineering support and vital transportation to support individual readiness training in Kodiak; our biathlon team has been in the news for exceptional performance and awards; and our rescue squadron's service dog stole hearts as he was featured in multiple reports about deploying with and comforting those who experience post-traumatic stress. Air Guard and Army Guard crews participated in multiple search and rescue missions and saved lives here in Alaska, as they do year after year. We took gifts and goodies to children in villages during Operation Santa Claus in its 61st year of bridging the urban-rural gap. The list goes on, as there are many other examples of positive and encouraging stories about the Alaska National Guard.

2. You also may have noticed the Alaska National Guard was referred to recently in an Anchorage Daily News editorial column. Some of you have expressed concern about the Alaska National Guard being unfairly portrayed, especially given our considerable, ongoing, and most importantly, successful, efforts to strengthen the health and performance of our organization.

3. As those who swear to protect and defend the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Alaska, we understand and respect the First Amendment, notably freedom of the press. Journalists have a job to do, and they should be able to reasonably expect transparency from government agencies. We may wish that in this case the writer had more clearly differentiated his frustration at not getting more information from other agencies from the process improvement and openness evident in today's Guard, but we don't get to write the articles, nor choose the headlines. We may feel that after all the Alaska National Guard has accomplished, it was unfair to sensationalize our previous problems to highlight the perceived shortfalls by other agencies. But we've not only got to live with this, we're going to stand tall and grow from it.

4. The Alaska National Guard has acted to the fullest extent, consistent with law, to ensure ethical fitness within our force and negative consequences for those who choose not to comply with our standards. We have been fully transparent in all media queries,

NGAK-TAG
SUBJECT: AKNG in the News

as much as our regulations allow. We encourage complete transparency within the legal and regulatory limits from all external agencies that may have involvement in Alaska National Guard matters, as we all serve the public.

5. Some of the actions and efforts to improve the health of our force in the past three-and-a-half years include: executing key leadership changes; hiring a full-time provost marshal and special victims counsel; emplacing the first-ever AKNG senior enlisted leader; setting and communicating our vision, core values, lines of effort, and the DMVA Integrated Strategy; reporting all personnel actions resulting from external investigations; assisting the Alaska State Legislature in revising the Alaska Code of Military Justice for the first time since 1955; standing up a full-time, fully functioning, effective joint staff to focus on domestic emergency preparedness; and reestablishing our counterdrug program. We have developed a line of effort focusing on the development of ethical fitness and character. We have held multiple all-call, town hall-style meetings to present a unified emphasis on our values and objectives, and to receive your feedback. We conducted unit climate assessments with follow up instructions to leadership to correct what fell short. We have an inclusive open-door policy to receive feedback from the Soldiers and Airmen at the heart of the Guard. We have fully embraced our rural engagement and recruiting initiative, prompting support from National Guard Bureau and Department of the Army. We remain devoted to continuing recognition of those who honorably served in the Alaska Territorial Guard. We are working hard every day to better integrate all four branches of the Alaska Organized Militia, including the Alaska State Defense Force and the Alaska Naval Militia, fulfilling the promise of strength in diversity and widespread military presence in Alaska. These are just a few examples of our accomplishments. Your accomplishments. All this has been a team lift. We are moving forward together and will continue to collaborate to address challenging issues to ensure we are the best that we can be.

6. The Alaska National Guard is a premier force driven by core values. We are empowered by mutual trust and respect. We remain ready and relevant for service to our state and nation. These aren't empty words. They are true and proven. I am proud to stand by them, and I am especially proud of you—the Airmen and Soldiers of our organization. We are the Alaska National Guard: motivated; diverse; skilled; capable; and “Always Ready, Always There.” Keep up the good work and hold your heads high. You have much to be proud of.

Sincerely,



LAUREL J. HUMMEL
Major General, AKNG
The Adjutant General